TDM Success Story:

Studies of Two Congested Urban Corridors Call for TDM Solutions in the Planning Process

Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT's) Office of Urban Mobility is managing studies of two congested travel corridors in the central Puget Sound region. Both the I-405 and Trans-Lake Washington (SR 520) planning studies are including, for the first time, substantial Transportation Demand Management (TDM) within theEnvironmental Impact Statement (EIS) alternatives being studied. Because of the numerous jurisdictions, high price tags and potential impacts to travel and surrounding communities, these studies involve complex public involvement processes. Elected officials, transportation leaders and neighborhood activists serving on the projects' study committees have come together to include TDM as an important and cost-effective component that addresses congestion.

Background

- The I-405 and Trans-Lake Washington studies are TDM "process" successes in the world of urban corridor planning. For the first time in the Puget Sound region these major studies are including major TDM components that will be studied in depth. It has, in fact, been necessary to include TDM in order to be customer-responsive to the requests of community and elected study committee members who recognize they must seek integrated, multi-modal transportation solutions for their cities and neighborhoods.

TDM in the I-405 Study

- **Study purpose/area:** The I-405 study is sponsored by WSDOT in partnership with King County, Sound Transit, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. The final package of transportation improvements will identify the best multi-modal investment strategies to improve mobility, preserve environmental quality and support vibrant, livable communities along the corridor. I-405 was built as an eastside bypass to I-5 around Seattle, its approximately 30-mile length starts at I-5 near Tukwila to the south, and reconnects to I-5 near Lynnwood to the north.

I-405 Study TDM Component

The I-405 TDM package calls for inter-local or sub-regional agreements for implementation and focuses on SOV and other trip reduction through new and/or expanded efforts in the following areas:

- **Vanpooling.**
- **Public information, education and promotion.**
- **Employer-based TDM programs.**
- **Land use TDM strategies.**
- **Innovative ridesharing incentives and targeted TDM demonstrations.**

The primary study area focuses on an approximately five-mile-wide area along the entire length of I-405, and a section of SR 167 from I-405 to Kent.

- **Study timing:** The final EIS is scheduled for completion by March 2001. As the study enters the EIS's detailed alternative analysis phase, the Executive Committee has already approved a substantial TDM component to be included in all alternatives to be studied in depth.

TDM in the Trans-Lake Washington Study

- **Study purpose/area:** The Trans-Lake Washington Study was authorized by the State Transportation Commission and funded by the State Legislature in 1997. Its purpose is to improve mobility across Lake Washington. The problem motivating the study is chronic congestion on SR 520, a major east-west artery, which includes a four-lane floating bridge, with serious bottlenecks at the approaches on both sides. The study is charged with integrating a wide variety of transportation options, including increased highway and transit capacity, TDM, new or enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and environmental mitigation and enhancements.

- **Study timing:** The study committees' preliminary recommendations will be developed by 2001, with the final EIS completed by 2003. Implementation of the corridor plan could begin as early as 2004.

Trans-Lake Study TDM Component

Although a specific TDM package was not identified during the pre-EIS study phase, a 47-member study team recommends the following TDM and TSM (Transportation Systems Management) components for further consideration during the EIS process:

- **Assess land use policies and regulations within the corridor and specific measures local agencies could take to reduce trips.**
- **Assess specific actions that would increase transit, vanpool and carpool use.**
- **Develop and assess low cost options to improve traffic flow and safety, and identify those that could be implemented in the short term.**

TDM components will be considered further and developed for all alternatives included in the study.

Why are these studies already considered TDM successes?

Major TDM initiatives included in Puget Sound area corridor planning process for the first time:

- Although final recommendations have not been adopted for either of these corridor studies, and funding is uncertain for any future actions, it is expected that both resulting plans will include major long-range TDM components. This is because already, early in the study processes, TDM has been acknowledged by the community as an integral part of any multi-modal solution.

Other TDM "firsts" in corridor planning:

- **"Packages" concept:** The I-405 study marks the first time WSDOT planners have, up-front in a major planning process, developed "packages" of complementary long-term TDM strategies for approval by key decision-makers, citizens, community activists and transportation officials.

- **Local and sub-regional agreements concept:** The Trans-Lake Washington Study is introducing, for the first time in the region, the concept of implementing land-use-related TDM as well as locally-sponsored TDM measures via inter-local or sub-regional agreements among jurisdictions within the study area. This approach is carrying over to the I-405 planning process.

- **Wide acceptance of TDM effectiveness and cost estimates:** Planners have increasingly good data on the effectiveness of CTR and vanpooling. However, it remains difficult to estimate or model the effectiveness and costs of some of TDM strategies. Committees of citizens, senior staff and elected officials participating in both studies have recognized that the effects of some TDM actions must be considered subjectively, to a substantial

degree. During the EIS phase of the I-405 study, which identified a specific package of TDM actions, estimates for long-term TDM programs were accepted and acknowledged during the rigorous public committee process.

- **Quickest and cheapest implementation:** Both study processes have recognized that TDM can be implemented the soonest and cheapest of any multi-modal solution. This is because implementation of TDM strategies often involves expanding or piggybacking on existing programs, rather than gearing up for new and expensive design and construction. TDM strategies may also be quickly implemented to assist with construction mitigation.

Puget Sound community and political environment favors TDM:

- The public involvement processes and study committees for both studies reflect a strong political and community environment favoring TDM strategies as important, integral components of the multi-modal solutions necessary to address growing congestion in major corridors. For example, the I-405 Executive Committee, comprised largely of local elected officials and agency heads, ultimately doubled the amount of TDM actions the staff and citizen committees had recommended for the corridor, and asked that this aggressive package be included in all alternatives to be studied in depth.

Impressive Potential TDM Stats

Although no hard statistics are available yet for either study, the I-405 TDM package has been tentatively estimated at a 20-year cost of $350-$400,000,000, well below the cost of major road construction. This TDM package is estimated to reduce trips from 2 to 5% within the I-405 corridor.

Information and statistics taken from Washington State Department of Transportation's Office of Urban Mobility web pages (see address below), project reports and staff, July 2000.

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